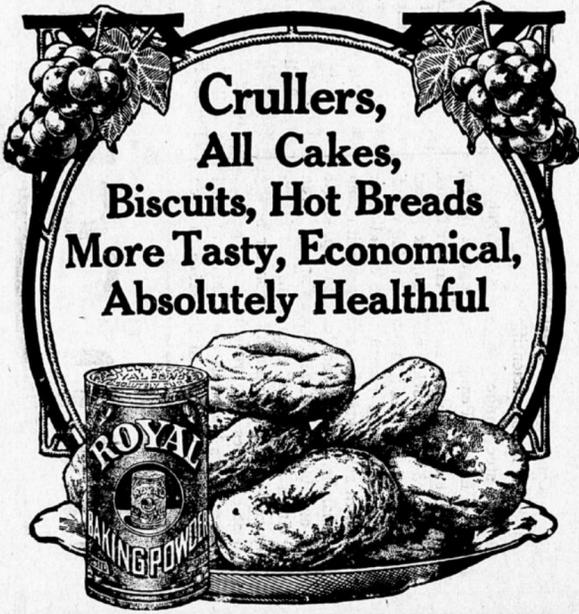


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CHAPTER XV.

"Banzai Nippon!"

Gradually, as they proceeded, the throng became denser, Policemen in neat suits of white duck and wearing long cavalry swords lined the road. They had smart military-looking caps and white cotton gloves, and stood, as had the officer before the file of convicts in Shimbashi station, moveless and imperturbable.

The air was full of exhilaration; people were laughing and chatting. The British Ambassador displayed the plaid of a Colonel of Highlanders; he had fought in the Soudan. The Chinese Minister was in his own mandarin costume; from his round, jade-buttoned hat swept the much-coveted peacock feathers and on his breast were the stars of the "Rising Sun" and the "Double Dragon." The American Ambassador alone, of all the foreign representatives, wore the plain frock coat and silk hat of the civilian. From group to group strolled officials of the Japanese Foreign Office and Cabinet Ministers, their ceremonial coats crossed by white or crimson cordons. And through it all Barbara moved, responsive to all this lightness and color, bowing here and there to introductions that left her only the more conscious of the one tall figure that had met them and now walked at her side.

Daunt could not have told that the flowers in her hat were brown orchids, he only knew that they matched the color of her eyes. Last night the moonlight had lent her something of the fragile and ethereal like itself. Now the sun, sunlight painted in clear warm colors of cream and cardinal.

He started, as "A penny for your thoughts," she said, with sudden mischievousness.

"Have you so much about you?" he countered.

"That's a subterfuge."

"You wouldn't be flattered to hear them, I'm afraid."

"The reflection is certainly a sad blow to my self-esteem!"

"Well," he said darily, "I was thinking how I would like to pick you up in my arms before all these people and run right out in the center of that field—"

She flushed to the tips of her ears.

"And then—"

"Just run, and run, and run away."

"What a heroic exploit!" she said with subtle mockery, but the flush deepened.

"You know to what lengths I can go in my longing to be a hero!" he muttered.

"Running off with girls under your arm seems to have become a mania. But isn't your idea rather prosaic in this age of flying machines? To swoop down on one in an aeroplane would be so much more thrilling! This is the field where you practice, too, isn't it? Is that building way over there where you keep your glider?"

"Yes. At first I made the models in a Japanese house of mine near here. I keep it still, from sentiment."

"How fine to meet a man who admits to having sentiment! I'm tremendously interested in Japanese houses. You must show it to me."

"I will. And when will you let me take you for a fly?"

"I'm relieved," she said, "to find you willing to ask permission."

Her eyes sparkled into his and both laughed. Patricia was chatting animatedly with Count Voynich, a young diplomatist, whose monocle looked absurdly contemplative and serene under a menacing helmet. The confusion of many colors, the pomp and panoply under the day's golden azure, was singing in Barbara's veins.

Daunt, watching Barbara, saw the light leaping in her brown eyes, the excitement coming and going in her face. Again and again he fixed his gaze before him, as infantry, cavalry and artillery marched and pounded and rumbled past. In vain. Like a wilful drunkard it returned to intoxicate itself with the sight of her eager beauty that made the scene for him only a splendid blur, an extraneous impression of masses of swaying bodies moving like marionettes, of glistening bayonets, horses, clattering ammunition wagons and fluttering pennants.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Silent Understanding.

Phil descended from his rick'sha at the Toyko Club and paid the coolie.

The building faced an open square between the Imperial Hotel and the Parliament buildings, along one of the smaller picturesque moats, which the fever for modernization was now filling in to make a conventional boulevard. A motor shed stood at the side of the plaza and an automobile or two was generally in evidence. The structure was small but comfortable enough, with reading and card rooms and a billiard room of many tables.

The door was opened by a servile bell boy in buttons. Phil tossed his hat on the hall rack and entered. He strode through the office and entered a large, glass-enclosed piazza where a number of Japanese, some in foreign, some in native costume, were watching a game of Go. Frowning, he passed into the next room.

Here his eye lightened. Sitting in a corner of one of the huge sofas which sank under his enormous weight, was Doctor Bersonin. A little round table was before him on which sat a tall glass frosted with cracked ice.

"Sit down," said the expert. "How do you come to be in Tokyo? The Review, I presume." He struck a call bell on the table and gave an order to the waiter.

Phil lighted a cigarette. "No," he said, "I've come to stay for a while."

"You haven't given up your bungalow on the bluff?" asked Bersonin quickly. There was an odd eagerness in his colorless face—a look of almost dread, which Phil, lighting his cigarette, did not see. It changed to relief as the other answered:

"No. Probably I shan't be here more than a few days."

The expert settled back in his seat. "You'll not find the hotel everything it should be, I'm afraid," he observed more casually.

"I'm not there," Phil answered. "I've got a little Japanese house."

"So! A menage de garcon, eh?" The big man held up his clinking glass to the light, and under cover of it, his deep set yellowish eyes darted a keen, detective look at Phil's averted face. "Well?" he went on, "how are your affairs? Has the stern brother appeared yet?"

Phil shifted uneasily. "No," he replied. "I expect him pretty soon, though." He drained the glass the boy had filled. "You've been tremendously kind, Doctor," he went on hurriedly, "to lend me so much, without the least bit of security—"

"Pshaw!" said Bersonin. "Why

shouldn't I?" He put his hand on the other's shoulder with a friendly gesture. "I only wish money could give me as much pleasure as it does you, my boy."

Phil moved his glass on the table top in sullen circles. "But suppose one hasn't the 'wherewithal' you talk of? What's the fun without money, even when you're young? I've never been able to discover it!"

"Find the money," said Bersonin. "I wish some one would tell me how!"

Bersonin's head turned toward the door. He sat suddenly rigid. It came to Phil that he was listening intently to the talk between the two men in the next room.

"I needn't point out"—it was a measured voice, cold and incisive and deliberate—"that when the American fleet came, two years ago, conditions were quite different. The cruise was a national tour de force; the visit to Japan was incidental. Besides, there was really no feeling then between the two nations—that was all a creation of the yellow press. But the coming of this European squadron today is a different thing. It is a season of general sensitiveness and distrust, and when the ships belong to a nation between which and Japan there is a real and serious diplomatic tension—well, in my opinion the time is, at best, inopportune."

"Perhaps—a younger voice was speaking now, less certain, less poised and a little hesitant—perhaps the very danger makes for caution. People are particularly careful with matches when there's a lot of powder about."

"True, so far as intention goes. But there is the possibility of some contretemps. You remember the case of the Ajax in the eighties. It was blown up in a friendly harbor—clearly enough by accident, at least so far as the other nation was concerned. But it was during a time of strain and hot blood, and you know how narrowly a great clash was averted. If war had followed, regiments would have marched across the frontier, shouting: 'Remember the Ajax!' As it was, there was a panic in three bourses. Solid securities fell to the lowest point in their history. The yellow press pounded down the market, and a few speculators on the shore side made gigantic fortunes."

A moment's pause ensued. Bersonin's fingers were rigid. There seemed suddenly to Phil to be some significance between his silence and the conversation—as if he wished it to sink into his, Phil's, mind. The voice continued:

"What has happened once may happen again. What if one of those dreadnaughts by whatever action should go down in this friendly harbor? It does not take a vivid imagination to picture the headlines, next morning in the newspapers at home!"

The ice in the tumblers clinked; there was a sound of pushed-back chairs.

As their departing footsteps died in the hall Bersonin's gaze lifted slowly to Phil's face. It had in it now the look it had held when he gazed from the roof of the bungalow on the bluff across the anchorage beneath. Phil did not start or shrink. Instead, the slinking evil that ruled him met halfway the bolder evil in that glance, from whose sinister suggestion the veil was for a moment lifted, recognizing a tacit kinship. Neither spoke, but as the hard young eyes looked into the cavernous, topaz eyes of Doctor Bersonin, Phil knew that the thought that lay coiled there was a thing unholy and unafraid. His heart beat faster, but it warmed. He felt no longer awed by the other's greater age, standing and accomplishments. He was conscious of a new, half-insolent sense of easy comradeship.

Continued Next Week.

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